

'Ough's Place' Was There Well Ahead of Washougal

By W. K. PEERY

"For Clarke county, in the territory of Washington, containing all road matter, transactions by the county commissioners of said county, from July 7 AD 1851, to wit:

July 7, 1851 from Columbia City to Cascade. It is ordered that a road be viewed from Columbia City to Cascade City, whereupon S. D. Maxon, John Brown, and Milton Hamilton was (sic) appointed viewers thereof. Signed William Simmons, William Goodwin, Commissioners."

The above excerpt from early county records marks the beginning of what was to become part of highway 830, that runs through Camas eastward.

At that time there was no city of Vancouver, or Camas, Washougal, or North Bonneville.

The town of Columbia City, mentioned in the court order above was a small, scattered community close to the government barracks at Fort Vancouver. This community later became the town of Vancouver, its dominant citizen being Amos Short, the man who had been an American hair shirt to the Hudson's Bay Co.

Ahead of Washougal

A small settlement had sprung up at what is now Washougal, but was known

then only as "The Ough Place." Cascades was located the distance of an arrow shot above where the replica of Fort Raines now stands.

This fort had stood originally on a point of land that was later washed away by the swift currents of Cascades rapids. All the above transactions took place nearly 32 years before the advent of Washougal and Camas.

The viewers appointed to study the feasibility of this road to the Cascades, reported that a continued route over Cape Horn, beyond the Ough Place was not feasible.

The commissioners appointed a new viewing committee to inspect a route reaching the Joseph Gibbons place, which ran to the west base of Cape Horn mountain. William Ryan, Lewis Leiser and Richard Ough were appointed.

Incidentally, Richard Ough had previously been an employee of the Hudson's Bay Co. He had married a daughter of Chief Casanove, the latter a favorite of Dr. John McLoughlin.

Casanove was the last of the line of the once powerful Multnomah chiefs. Smallpox and measles had virtually wiped out his people and there were only a few remaining in small scattered villages.

Maxon Was Surveyor

H. J. G. Maxon, the one who originated the construction of the first saw mill in the Camas-Washougal area, was appointed surveyor for the new road. H. J. G. Maxon and a commissioner was a brother to S. D. Maxon whose homestead is partially within the boundary of Washougal. Both were active in this early enterprise, as was Henry M. Knapp, grandfather of Cecil Knapp and great-grandfather of Hugh Knapp, both of this city.

The committee of which Knapp was a member, recommended a spur leading to the Columbia to Goodwin's ferry which operated from the vicinity of Lady's Island to the Oregon shore.

Once the road was under construction, David Parker was appointed supervisor for this district.

During the duration of H. J. G. Maxon's term as county commissioner, the Mill Plain road was also laid out.

Prior to the "Columbia City—Ough's Bottom" road, a trip to Columbia City, or present Vancouver was either by horseback over the Hudson's Bay cattle trail by way of Lackamas Lake, or down the Columbia river. On the trail route transportation of goods was by pack horse or the back of the traveler. It took a good three and a half to four hours each way by this inland route.

It took longer by boat, inasmuch as the boats went on the Portland, which meant a long wait at Columbia City.

Pioneer Trailways

The route as laid out to Ough's Bottom, or Washougal, crossed the Lackamas near the old Camas creamery site, and stood virtually on the spot where the present highway bridge stands.

It followed along the north bank of the Washougal river and on to the location of the present bridge that crosses the Washougal river in the city limits of the town. The route from there eastward to the Gibbons place is problematical.

That was before the townsite of Washougal was laid out.

All this happened over 115 years ago when the pioneer trailways were crossed and recrossed by bear, deer, elk, cougars, and bobcats, as well as other denizens of this heavily forested area, which still remained much as Lewis and Clark found it less than 48 years before. Improved communications mark the beginning of advancement. The layout of the road from Columbia City to Ough's Bottom was an historical event in the rise of a wilderness community to a progressive section in a modern commonwealth.